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The Effect of Quality of Work Life (QWL) Programs on Quality of Life (QOL) Among Employees at Multinational companies in Malaysia.

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Abstract—In this study, the researchers examined the relationship between quality of work life (QWL) programs and quality of life (QOL) among employees at multinational companies in Bintulu, Sarawak, Malaysia. In addition, the study examined the elements of quality of work life (QWL) programs as a contributing factor to quality of life (QOL) that can influence employee productivity.

The participants consisted of 179 employees currently working at multinational companies in Bintulu, Sarawak. The respondents were randomly selected and the data were gathered through the distribution of questionnaires.

Descriptive statistics showed that there were more female than male employees, mostly were fairly young, around 29 years old and below and majority of them hold position as general employee in the multinational companies. The study found that there was significant relationship between quality of work life (QWL) programs and quality of life (QOL). The most influence factor on quality of life (QWL) were work environment followed by job facets. The result also indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between quality of work life (QWL) programs and

quality of life (QOL). The most influence factors were emotional wellbeing, personal development, social inclusion and interpersonal relations. Therefore, the researcher highly recommend those multinational companies to plan an excellent quality of work life (QWL) programs by focussing on particular service elements that will further enhance the overall quality of life (QOL) of employees.

As a conclusion, the researchers found that quality of work life (QWL) programs influence quality of life (QOL) of employees in organization. The researchers provided recommendations for future research to be implemented using different population, qualitative research, using other elements of QWL programs and QOL as well as in different sectors such as hotel industry.

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Keywords—*Quality of work life, Quality of life, multinational companies*

I.

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, globalization had forced the economy to evolve towards services and information technologies, thus making employees as organization's most valuable asset. Walton (2007) stressed that quality of work life (QWL) was an important approach to save human and environmental values which have been ignored due to technological advancement of the economic growth and productivity. Quality of work life (QWL) was no longer a new issue in organization because most past studies conducted by various researches have proved that quality of work life (QWL) was the most important priorities that should be considered by organization. Howard (1993) stated that Quality of Work Life (QWL) was both a goal and continuous process for achieving it. Howard (1993) added that organization should committed towards QWL to make improvement in their work so it will be favourable and good jobs and work environment for people at the organization while it need efforts through the active participation of people throughout the organization during the process.

The growing number of women who entered the labor force also demands for new work environment and work demands. The labor force was usually associated with male domination but as more women also enter the work force have increased awareness and concern for organization to adjust the working time, salary, child care and more in order to fulfill their needs. Akdere (2006) stated that based on survey of working adults conducted by New York Times (1998), 83% of working mothers and 72% of working of fathers reported that they experienced conflict between job demands and the desire to meet their families. Employees who had been working for a period of time in the organization possessed valuable experience and skills that bring profits to the organization.

Hackman and Oldhams (1980) mentioned that conceptual elements of QWL in relation to the association for work environment and employees personal needs. The work environment satisfied employees' personal needs were considered to provide a positive interaction effect that will lead to an excellent QWL. Work environment must be conducive because it was the place where employees will work and spend most of their time to do their work. Employees will still try to work hard to complete their task regardless of the workload when they find that their working environment is pleasant for them. If their salaries were better with good benefits that fulfilled their personal needs they will stay and loyal to the organization which was a good approach of employee retention in an organization.

In fact, Maslow hierarchy of needs also emphasized on the importance of understanding an individual needs which he categorized into physiological, safety, belongingness and love, esteem, and self-actualization needs. The lowest level needs of the hierarchy must be satisfied in order to proceed to the next level. Rethinam and Ismail (2008) mentioned that QWL has similarity with Maslow's hierarchy of needs that were developed by Abraham Maslow which each individual needs varies from each other because what is important to

some employees may not be important to others. Maslow's Hierarchy of needs stressed that the lowest level of the hierarchy must be satisfy first in order to proceed to the next level in the hierarchy.

QWL usually associated with Quality of life based on past studies where there was a positive relationship between QWL and QOL. Nguyen & Nguyen (2011) also stated that there was a lack of empirical evidence for quality of work life (QWL) and quality of life (QOL) relationship in Vietnam. According to Pukeliene and Starkauskiene (2011), quality of life (QOL) theory of research was formed in Western Europe and Northern America back in the 1960's. Andrews and Withey's (1976) measure of QWL was found to be significant strong predictor of life satisfaction (Sirgy, Michalos, Feris, Easterlin, Patrick and Pavot, 2006). QWL contributed to overall quality of life (QOL) through spillover, segmentation, and compensation (Rain et al., 1991; Staines, 1980; Wilensky, 1960). Sirgy et al. (2006) stated that the spillover effect referred to the process and outcome affective experiences in the work life domain influence the affect experienced in and overall life while the segmentation effect refers to the method of isolate experiences and affect in one life domain of people that preventing affect transfer between life domains. Quality of life (QOL) was known as the broader aspect of QWL. Therefore, quality of life (QOL) was also another important aspect that should be given priorities in organization.

QWL can be summarized as a wide-ranging concept that included sufficient and fair remuneration, social integration and safe and healthy working conditions in the work organization that enables an individual to improve and use all his or her skills. QWL was the smaller aspect of quality of life (QOL) that need to be explore more in terms of the QWL programs where less programs were develop to improve the effects of QWL programs to quality of life (QOL). Royuela, Tamayo & Surinach (2008) also stated that quality of work life (QWL) was related to quality of life (QOL) by viewing it as an integral part of quality of life (QOL). All elements in quality of work life (QWL) were proved somewhat related to the overall employees quality of life (QOL).

Quality of work life (QWL) and quality of life (QOL) were two of the most important and fundamental subjects in today's organizational. Organizations, as systems, need coordination and efficiency among their subsystems while manpower was the most important of subsystems and organizations considered it as important priorities (Asgari and Dadashi, 2011). Apart from that, higher education, job and success in life were among the goals that individuals nowadays tried to achieve in their life that lead to serious problems in the quality of life (QOL) such as more aging population where more people get married at late 30s because they were busy with their career. Based on Inoguchi and Fujii (2009) studies on Quality of life quality of life (QOL) in Japan that raised concern on the growing number of aging populations in the countries due to the advancement of their life which makes the societies in Japan busy focusing on their career and work rather than focus on having their own family.

Most past studies conducted in the past focused on QWL but pay less attention to the QWL programs that were useful in the implementation of their suggestions and recommendations. Besides, in Malaysia, there was limited research conducted on the effect of QWL programs on quality of life (QOL).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The broad terms of the quality of working life usually related to hours and wages, compensation benefits, work environment and career development which was relevant to worker's satisfaction and motivation, work ethics, work conditions, and managerial concerns about the efficiency of output. In the past studies, Lawler (1982) defined that QWL related to job characteristics and work conditions because the entire QWL in the organization goals was to improve employee's well-being and support from productivity. Then, Beukema (1987) referred QWL as the extent to which employees were able to configure their jobs aligned with their options, interests and needs in the organization.

Employees have the power given by their organization to design their own work according to their needs that give them the freedom to design their job functions. Serey (2006) defined that QWL was associated with meaningful and satisfying work. It includes an opportunity to utilize one's skills and capacities, to confront challenges and situations that require self-initiative and self-direction, an activity should be practiced by the individuals in organization. Muftah (2011) mentioned that QWL (QWL) was one of the key areas of human resource management that is attracting attention and research focus. It was a philosophy that considers people as the most important resources in the organization and views them as an „asset' to the organization rather than as „costs". Shamir and Solomon (1985) defined quality of work life (QWL) as a comprehensive construct that includes wellbeing related to an individual's job and the degree to which work experiences were rewarding, fulfilling, and reduce stress.

II. QUALITY OF WORK LIFE (QWL) PROGRAMS

Most past studies conducted on QWL by various researchers since the early 1970's was to deepen their understanding on improving the employee satisfaction and productivity. Martel and Dupuis (2006) stated that the first QWL programs in the United States allowed workers to play an active role in decisions concerning their working conditions with objectives to evaluate employees' satisfaction in order to develop a series of program to increase workers productivity. Past studies on QWL programs by Klein (1986) revealed that various employee-centered programs designed to improved productivity. Klein (1986) added that the QWL programs consists of bonus based on group or unit productivity, communication programs, general costs reduction programs, horizontal or vertical workplace study, labor-management

productivity committee, largely self-managed work groups or teams, participative management, profits sharing programs, Scanlon Plans programs, employee suggestions systems, quality circles and productivity team. Shareef (1990) stated that the QWL and employee involvement programs are intended to improve employee well-being and productivity in the 90's. Sirgy et al. (2008) have identified several QWL programs related to the work environment. The QWL programs were decentralized organizational structures, teamwork, parallel structures and quality circles, and ethical corporate culture. QWL programs enriched employee job motivation and job performance, employee loyalty and commitment to the organization, low turnover rate, lower rates of employee absenteeism, and lower strife between management and labor (Sirgy et al., 2006).

Wyatt and Wah (2001) also mentioned that Asia emphasized less degree on QWL compared to North America and Europe because of few organizations operating using QWL programs and few research papers published on QWL in the South East Asia regions. This proved that few organization practiced QWL programs in South East Asia in order to achieve satisfaction in employees and their job. In Malaysia's context, there were many research papers conducted on QWL in Malaysia but research on the QWL programs according to Malaysian context was somehow limited as well as research linking QWL and QOL.

A. Quality of work life (QWL) programs related to work environment

Work environment studies shown that physical and social work environment did affect employees' emotional wellbeing (Cummings and Malloy, 1977; Glaser, 1980; Lawler, 1986; Sheppard and Herrick, 1972; Simmons and Mares, 1985; Susman 1976). Bagtasos (2011) stated that QWL encompassed the characteristics of the work and work environment influence employee's work lives. QWL was the favourable conditions and environments of the workplace that addresses the welfare and well-being of employees (Huang, 2007). Knox and Irving (2001) stated that strength and weaknesses of the work environment plays an important role in determining QWL. Condition of the work environment should be given more attention because it affects job performance (Gnanayudam & Dharmasiri, 2007) and work attitude (Trau & Hartel, 2007) towards the organization. Ahmad (2013) stated that the core pillar of QWL was to create a work environment that employee can work cooperatively with each other in order to achieve to organization objectives. According to Sirgy et al. (2006), there were several programs identified related to the work environment. The programs were decentralized organizational structures, teamwork, parallel structures and quality circles and ethical corporate culture.

B. *Quality of work life (QWL) programs related to job facets*

Job facets or also known as job requirements are the requirements that need to be fulfilled by employees related to their jobs. Therefore, employees were disappointed when their job demands are far too great for them to handle (Loscocco and Roschelle, 1990). In fact, by doing the requirements of the jobs, employees learn many skills and knowledge out of the job besides completing their task. According to Loscocco and Roschelle (1990), when job demands are too great to accomplish by employees, they can easily become frustrated because they also have various needs that need to be fulfilled. Various studies conducted by past researchers also found that too much workloads, overtime, and conflicting role demands made employees experienced emotional stress (Bacharach et al., 1990; Caplan et al., 1980; House et al., 1979; Menaghan and Merves, 1984).

Quality of work life (QWL) programs was related to Maslow Hierarchy of needs, Porter's needs and a work life identity model. Maslow Hierarchy of needs was considered a consistent theory of quality of work life because it consists of physiological, safety, belongingness and love, esteem, self-actualization needs and transcendence. Then, Porter (1961) developed a QWL to measure need satisfaction in the organizational context based on Maslow Hierarchy of needs. Porter (1961) QWL measure objectives were to assess employees levels of needs according to their job, the level of organizational resources related to employees experiences and the congruence between a person's needs and organizational resources that reflect organization needs fulfilment. The model also covered Maslow's four needs categories including seven needs namely survival needs, social needs, ego needs and self-actualization needs.

Based on Sirgy et al. (2008) interactionist model of the relationship between QWL programs and QOL include characteristics of the person (employee) and work environment (QWL programs), and the affective reactions that result from the dynamic fit between the two. Sirgy et al. (2008) added that delightful QWL programs serve to enhance QOL by providing work resources to adhere to the expectations of employee, lessening role conflict related to work and non-work life, enhancing multiple role identities, lessening role demands, reducing stress work and non-work related stress, and boost the importance of a role identity. Researchers chose Work-Life Identity model that relate to the QOL in this studies because it describes in detail the information regarding the quality of work life and non-work life programs spill over on overall life. In this study, the researches focused on quality of work life programs to identify the effect on quality of life.

C. *Quality of life (QOL)*

QOL was the broader aspect of QWL that usually used to evaluate the well being of individuals and societies. Back then in the past, the term QOL was not widely used and the term socioeconomic status, level-of-living, and social status

was used to composite measures of families' living conditions.

Hagerty (2001) defined QOL as a term that implies the quality of a person's whole life, not just a separate component part.

According to Gilgeous (1998), QOL could be defined as an individual's satisfaction with his or her life dimensions comparing with his or her ideal life where evaluation of the quality of life depends on individual's value system and on the cultural environment where they lives. Various number of term related to QOL was included: stratification and inequality, social inequality, wealth and income, poverty, socioeconomic status, and others (Johnson, 2002). Rice et al. (1985) have defined the quality of life (QOL) as a set of beliefs directed toward the totality of one's life (overall quality of life) or toward specific domains of life (e.g., quality of work life or perceived quality of family life).

In Malaysia's context, Omar (2009) mentioned that QOL encompasses the fulfilment of human needs such as a satisfactory material life, health, education, security, living in a clean environment and also the enjoyment of the aesthetic and spiritual needs. Based on studies conducted by Azahan et al. (2009) on the quality of life in Malaysia's intermediate city from urban dwellers perspective where the researchers examined by their income and distribution, education, health status and family living. Schalock Model was developed by Robert L. Schalock and Miguel Á. Verdugo was used to measure quality of life (QOL). Schalock Model composed of eight-first-order correlated factors namely rights, self-determination, personal development, emotional wellbeing, material wellbeing, interpersonal relations, physical wellbeing and social inclusion. The researcher focused on emotional wellbeing, personal development, interpersonal relations and social inclusion of the Schalock Model to identify association between the variables with QWL programs in Malaysia context. Past studies conducted by Gomez et al. (2010) on a comparison of alternative models of individual quality of life (QOL) for social services recipients found that Schalock Model was the perfect model to represent the studies.

This study was attempted to investigate multinational companies because multinational companies involved in various industries such as oil palm processing, fertilizer, logistics and oil and gas. Therefore, the employees of the multinational companies also comprised of people from other countries who work in the multinational companies skills and knowledge that made the multinational companies to hired them. The existence of QWL programs in multinational companies was essential in order to retain valuable employees as it also influenced their quality of life (QOL).

Therefore, in order to determine the relationship between quality of work life (QWL) programs and quality of life (QOL), the following questions are used:

Research Question: What are the relationship between quality of work life (QWL) programs and quality of life (QOL) among employees at multinational companies in Bintulu, Sarawak, Malaysia?

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The study used a quantitative research method to identify the relationship between quality of work life (QWL) programs and quality of life (QOL). The purpose of using research design was to measure the degree of relationship between variables under study (Hall, 2009). According to Cherry (2008), a correlational studies were often used to identify relationships between variables and it might result either there were positive correlation, negative correlation or no correlation. Other than that, the researcher also can analyze relationships among many variables in a single study (Salkind, 2006).

B. Population

The total population comprised of 1805 employees from the hypermarkets. Table 1 shows the population of employees.

C. Sample and Sampling Technique

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010), sampling referred to the process of selecting a sufficient number of elements from the population. It was important to select right elements of the sample to make it representative of the whole population. Therefore, the sampling technique used to select the respondents in this study was probability sampling. The simple random sampling technique was used because it was the most common type of probability sampling procedure (Salkind, 2012). According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010), simple random sampling was when all the elements in the populations were considered and each element has an equal chance of being chosen as the subject.

D. Measurement

The elements used for measurement were QWL scale developed by Sirgy. Sirgy (2006) stated that the model of quality of work life (QWL) programs consists of work environment and job facets. The QWL scale includes (1) Work Environment programs such as decentralized organizational structures, teamwork, parallel structures and quality circles, ethical corporate mission and culture and the organization's work schedule; (2) Job facets such as participation in decision-making and high involvement programs, job enrichment programs and programs to enhance occupational status and prestige. For the purpose of this study, there were two areas of Quality of Work Life (QWL) programs that were applied such as work environment and job facets. Table 2.2 shows in detail each of the programs and sub-programs in QWL model.

The GENCAT instrument was developed to measure the dependent variable. The items of quality of life (QOL) that had been constructed by (Laura, Verdugo and Arias A, Arias, V 2011) were adapted to ensure that the questions accurately measure the quality of life. Table 2.3 shows in detail each of the domains, indicator and descriptor of Schalock Model.

Table 3.1
Elements of quality of work life (QWL) programs

ELEMENTS	NO. OF ITEMS
Work environment	14
Job facets	14

Table 3.2
Element of quality of life (QOL)

ELEMENTS	NO. OF ITEMS
Emotional wellbeing	6
Interpersonal relations	6
Personal development	4
Social inclusion	4

IV. FINDINGS

A. Normality Test

First step in analyzing data is the examination of data. According to Pallant (2005) most of the statistical techniques assume that the distribution of scores on the dependent variable is normal. **Table 4.1** below indicates the value of skewness and kurtosis of quality of work life (QWL) programs and quality of life (QOL).

Hence, it could be concluded that the sample of data collected from the population is normally distributed.

Table 4.1
Normality test

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
Quality of work life (QWL) programs	-0.919	1.471
Work environment	-1.316	2.616
Job facets	-0.733	0.466
Quality of life (QOL)	-0.806	0.155

B. Reliability Test

The reliability analysis was conducted by computing the Cronbach's alpha for each measure. Nunally (1987) suggested that the minimum acceptable reliability set at .60. All negatively worded items in the questionnaire were first reversed-coded.

As presented in **Table 4.2** below the Cronbach's alpha for independent variables are in the range of .88 to .94. The figures indicate that the measure had high internal consistency and stability. Hence, the measures used in this study were highly reliable, thus, suggested its readiness for further analysis.

Table 4.2
Reliability test

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
A. Quality of work life (QWL) programs	27	.944
Work environment	14	.938
Job facets	13	.885
B. Quality of life (QOL)	16	

C. Bivariate Correlation Analysis

Bivariate correlation analysis was used to explore the strength of the relationship between two continue variables. A positive correlation indicates that as one variable increases, so does the other, while negative correlation indicates that as one variable increases, the other decrease.

Table 4.3 below, shows the guideline to interpret the meaning of the correlation coefficient suggested by Cohen (1988).

Table 4.3
Cohen (1988) guidelines for interpreting correlation based on r values

Degree of correlation	r values
Very strong	± 0.8 and 1.0
Strong	± 0.6 and 0.8
Moderate	± 0.4 and 0.6
Weak	± 0.2 and 0.4
Very weak	± 0.2

The relationship between quality of work life and quality of life were measured using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. **Table 4.4** shows the moderate positive relationship between this two variables ($r=.593^{**}$, $p<.01$). It can be concluded that the higher respondents consider quality of work life (QWL) programs calling the higher the needs for quality of life (QOL).

Table 4.4
Correlation between quality of work life (QWL) programs and quality of life (QOL)

		Work environment	Job facets	QWL programs	QOL
Work Environment	Pearson Correlation	1	.686**	.922**	.579**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	170	170	170	170
Job facets	Pearson Correlation	.686**	1	.914**	.508**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	170	170	170	170
Quality of work life (QWL)	Pearson Correlation	.922**	.914**	1	.593**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	170	170	170	170
Quality of life (QOL)	Pearson Correlation	.579**	.508**	.593**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	170	170	170	170

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

D. Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 4.5 below summarizes the results of multiple regression analysis between quality of work life (QWL) dimensions and quality of life (QOL). Based on the table below, independent variables explained 16 percent of the variance (R square) in turnover intention which is significant as indicated by ($F=46.674$, $p<.01$). From the two dimensions of quality of work life (QWL) programs at the workplace, work environment with total of .404** was found contribute most to 16 percent of variance in quality of life (QOL).

Table 4.5

Summary of multiple regressions for relationship between elements of quality of work life (QWL) programs and quality of life (QOL)

Independent variable (IV)	Beta Dependent variable (DV) Turnover Intention Beta Coefficients and Significance levels
Quality of work life (QWL) programs	.593
Work environment	.404
Job facets	.203
R ²	.160
Significant of F value	.001
Durbin-Watson	1.63

** Significant at the .05 level

From the hypotheses findings, **Table 4.6** below is the summarized results for this study.

Table 4.6

The summary of overall hypotheses

Hypotheses	Overall results	
	Relationship	Result
HO₁ : There is a significant and positive relationship between quality of work life (QWL) programs and quality of life (QOL)	Positive and moderate relationship	Accepted (r=.593**)
HA₁ : There is a significant and positive relationship between work environment and quality of life (QOL)	Positive and moderate relationship	Accepted (r=.579**)
HA₂ : There is a significant and positive relationship between job facets and quality of life (QOL)	Positive and moderate relationship	Accepted (r=.508**)

Discussions

The result based on the correlational data analysis supported research question where it was found that there was a positive and significant relationship between quality of work life (QWL) programs and quality of life (QOL) among employees at multinational companies in Sarawak, Malaysia. All the elements of quality of work life (QWL) namely work environment and job facets significantly correlated with quality of life (QOL). The result was supported by Sirgy et al., (2008) that quality of work life (QWL) programs improved quality of life (QOL) of employees in organization.

The effect of QWL towards QOL among employees at multinational companies revealed that QWL did have a significant impact towards QOL. All the elements of QWL programs namely work environment and job facets were also found to correlate with overall QOL. In view of the fact that the QWL programs in the organization contributed to better QOL among employees and reduced employee turnover rate, organization should consider to continuously introduce, improve and enforce the QWL programs within the organization. The move will help organizations in enhancing its performance, productivity, employee commitment and satisfaction.

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